

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586



29 August 2008

QTTS Review
C/-Mr Steven Perissinotto
2/75 Payne Street
INDOOROPILLY QLD 4069

Submission from the Institute of Foresters of Australia Review of the Queensland Tree Tenure System

Dear Mr Perissinotto

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) is the organisation representing Australian professional foresters. The organisation was formed in 1935, has active branches in all of the Australian States and the ACT, and is a registered non-profit public company governed by an elected Board of Directors. A requirement of full membership is that members have university level qualifications in forestry or a closely related scientific discipline or extensive relevant practical experience in forest management or forest science.

The IFA is an advocate for better forest management in Australia, for high professional standards in forest and woodland management and for the active management of our forests for all values. Current membership is approximately 1350. Members are employed throughout Australia, and overseas, and in a variety of occupations, including native forest, plantation and national park management, research, bushfire management, land care, education, public service administration, private forestry and industry.

The IFA actively prepares policy statements on issues relevant to forestry in Australia. Several policy statements that are relevant to the Queensland Tree Tenure System are attached for your information and in support of this submission.

Submission

IFA supports legislation that encourages the planting of trees for commercial and environmental purposes and the sustainable management of all forests. IFA commends the Queensland Government for initiating the review of the Queensland Tree Tenure System in the spirit of providing more certainty for investors with an interest in plantation forestry, carbon trading and environmental services. The IFA agrees that any proposed changes to the tree tenure system should not be confined to the plantation sector and should extend to biosequestration and carbon credit schemes.

In addition the QTTS should also apply to arrangements for the banking of biodiversity credits in recognition of the increasing value placed on these credits.



The IFA considers that the maintenance of biological diversity is an essential component of native forest and plantation management. Biodiversity can be maintained and enhanced in native forests and plantations managed for timber production through the application of science based Codes of Practice, forest management plans and forest certification standards. The QTTS is also seen to be complementary to instruments such as the “Code applying to native forest practice on freehold land” under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

Any proposed tree tenure system should provide some certainty in security of tenure for land dedicated to forest management as an ongoing and legitimate land use. The harvesting of native forests outside nature reserves is an appropriate long-term forest use where management embodies the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. The IFA advocates that areas of public and private native forests beyond the National Reserve System be managed to integrate timber production with other forest services while maintaining ecological sustainability and other forest values.

The QTTS has evolved to meet changing community needs by amendments to existing legislation. The application of a tree tenure system across several pieces of legislation can lead to confusion and possible conflict in interpretation. It is the view of IFA members with some experience in the workings of QTTS that the principal legislation affecting tree tenure should be consolidated into the one Act, most logically the *Land Title Act 1994*. Aspects that provide clarity and security of tenure such as registration of *Profit a Prendre* and supporting agreements, such as the Part 6B agreements applying to Natural Resource Product are essential to the effective application of such legislation.

Whilst the QTTS is influenced by the *Land Title Act 1994*, *Land Act 1994*, *Forestry Act 1959*, *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, some members of the IFA who assist landowners in the management of their forested land have experienced difficulties with local government planning schemes implemented under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. There is evidence that several local government councils do not regard forest management to be a legitimate long term land use and have rejected applications to manage and harvest native forest areas by the application of local planning schemes.

These restrictions have been applied despite the forest owners meeting the requirements of the “Code applying to native forest practice on freehold land” and the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. The IFA is concerned that any long term harvest security offered to landowners of plantation and native forest by the QTTS and relevant Queensland Government legislation should not be overridden by local government decrees or planning policies, particularly where management complies with relevant management codes and best practice standards such as “The Australian Forestry Standard”. Whilst it can be established that forest management is an “existing lawful use” to protect land from the effect of planning scheme amendments there is still a level of uncertainty. This was illustrated in the case of *Barnes v Maroochy Sire Council* where a fluctuation in the level of activity (i.e. harvesting intensity) on the land was seen to represent a material change in the use of the land and make it subject to revised planning schemes.



There is also evidence that some local government councils do not support the changes in land use of agricultural land to forestry plantation because of a perception that long term forest management does not provide the same community benefits as agriculture. Forestry has an important and valuable role as a primary industry in Australia and should be encouraged to expand delivery of the multiple product and benefits in a sustainable manner.

The issues raised above broadly address the review of QTTS and are by no means exhaustive. The IFA, representing professional foresters in Queensland, welcomed the opportunity to comment on the Review of the Queensland Tree Tenure System and wishes to participate in any further discussions to refine the QTTS.

Yours faithfully

Dr Kerrie Catchpoole
Chair, Queensland Division

Attachments:

IFA Policy Statements

Timber Production and Biodiversity	Statement 1.4
Management Private Native Forests	Statement 2.2
Plantations in Rural Landscapes	Statement 2.3
Forest Regulation and Codes of Practice	Statement 2.8



Timber Production and Biological Diversity

(IFA Forestry Policy Statement Number 1.4)

Key Statement

The maintenance of biological diversity is an important component of sustainable forest management and can be achieved in native forests and plantations managed for timber production through the application of scientifically based forest management plans, forest certification standards and Codes of Practice.

The Issue

Forest managers (government and private sector) have policies and practices for managing native forests and timber plantations which ensure sustainable timber production in parallel with protection of biological diversity and preservation of landscape values. Implementation of internationally accepted forest management practices can minimise the impact of timber production from forests on biological diversity. However, unplanned short-term impacts may occur and demand remedial action.

Background

Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which Australia is a signatory, has used the following definition of biological diversity: *the variability which exists among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.* The objectives of the CBD are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from commercial and other utilization of genetic resources. Australia implements the objectives of the CBD under the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity, the National Forest Policy Statement and through the implementation of Regional Forest Agreements, species management, forest and protected area management plans.

Forest biological diversity is defined as the variability which occurs among forest living organisms and the ecological processes of which they are part; this includes diversity in forests within species, between species and of ecosystems and landscapes. Forest biodiversity provides a wide array of goods and services, from timber, clean water and other non-timber forest resources, to maximising resilience to climate change. At the same time, forests provide livelihoods and jobs for millions of people worldwide. Forest biological diversity also has important economic, social and cultural roles in the lives of many indigenous and local communities.

Native forests and timber plantations contribute differently to biodiversity. Native forests are diverse in their species mix, age and forest structure, have long lifecycles and deliver a broad range of timber and non-timber values. Native forests are living entities with natural life cycles. They are in a perpetual state of change and may suffer significant biological change through natural forces, eg. climate change, wind and fire. However, the conservation of biological diversity is one of the important goals of managing forests in an ecologically sustainable way, particularly with respect to the potential cumulative effects of forest management practices.

The general good health and vigour of regenerated native forests throughout Australia is testimony to the success of past forest management and timber harvesting practices.

Plantations are generally monocultures of single age stands grown for a defined period and are generally planted for timber production. Plantations change size temporally and spatially in the landscape and hence their contribution to biodiversity will be changing and ephemeral. Despite this, through appropriate commercial management, plantations may have an important secondary role in supporting biodiversity by providing corridor frameworks between native forests or forest habitat in agricultural landscapes.

Timber production and its impact on Biological Diversity

Timber production can be based on plantations (trees planted and grown for timber production) or native forests or a combination of both. Timber production is the primary commercial objective of tree plantations; however some plantations may be planted as carbon sinks, for environmental remediation (ie salinity) or to compliment spatial environmental outcomes. Timber production involves removing trees to be processed for timber and other forest products. The process may include: felling, snigging (transporting logs from where they were cut to where they can be loaded on to transport for processing), road construction, stream crossing, and treatment for regeneration. These activities are required to comply with appropriate standards for sustainable forest management.

Timber production has short-term impacts which include: visual, aesthetic, environmental, water values, fauna habitat, and off-forest impacts. Harvesting may also change the native forest ecosystem through impacts on flora species composition resulting in changed seed pool, species regeneration and structure of the vegetation. These impacts need not be negative on all native forests species, or have long-term negative impacts – harvesting is followed by a regeneration process, which favours early colonisers of the site – creating new ecosystem processes. In plantations, harvesting generally removes the entire stand, but is generally followed by replanting a new crop of trees on the site; though this will frequently occur within a mosaic pattern within the broader plantation estate.

The response of Australian native forests to disturbance is remarkable. However, the potential impacts of poorly managed harvesting and timber extraction on the environment are well documented. Research and the implementation of improved forest practices are occurring in all Australian States and Territories. Codes of Practice for Timber Harvesting incorporate principles of environmental care to foster the maintenance of biological diversity values.

State Governments have adopted sustainable forest management principles and forest certification systems, which can be independently audited in accordance with Australian and international standards for environmental, social and economic management. Many private forest owners are also adopting this approach. In addition, the application of sustainable forest management certification to plantations and native forests provides demonstrated benefits through continuous improvement, independent recognition of sustainability outcomes and improved market access.

All Australian States have legislation and policies that provide for biodiversity conservation. These include legislation and policies dealing with vegetation management and the protection of endangered and threatened species, old growth and high conservation value forests, and riparian areas.

Policy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates that biological diversity can be effectively conserved in native forests and plantations used for timber production through scientifically-based management plans and prescriptions as well as through the implementation of forest certification and Codes of Practice.

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Adoption of the relevant principles under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the relevant objectives and actions under the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biodiversity in the sustainable management of native forests and plantations;
- Establishment and effective management of a comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserve network together with the complementary management of biodiversity outside of forest reserves;
- Protection of significant biodiversity values, including threatened species, by the application of scientifically-based management prescriptions;
- Consideration of the ecosystem and landscape approaches for maintaining biodiversity in large native areas of native forest;
- Development, implementation and monitoring of codes of practice for timber production and associated harvesting plans that recognise and protect biological diversity;

- Mitigation of unplanned short-term impacts and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems (including off-forest) where long-term impacts are identified in native forest harvesting; and
- Ongoing research and development on adaptive management practices to protect biological diversity.

The IFA considers that:

- Timber production is a renewable, low energy use industry that need not threaten biological diversity;
- Excluding timber production from native forests does not guarantee protection of biological diversity; and
- Native forest ecosystems can recover from disturbance caused by timber harvesting and fire.

Further Information

Department of Environment, Sports and Territories (1996) National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biodiversity. <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy/index.html>

McDonald, G. T. and Lane, M.B.(2002) Forest Management Systems Evaluation: Using ISO14000.. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 45(5), 633–652.

Vanderwoude Cas, Lobry De Bruyn, Lisa A.,and House, Alan P. N. (2000) Long-term ant community responses to selective harvesting of timber from Spotted Gum (*Corymbia variegata*)-dominated forests in south-east Queensland *Ecological Management and Restoration*.1(3). p.204-214.

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Management of Private Native Forests

(IFA Forestry Policy Statement No. 2.2)

The Issue

Many of Australia's private native forests are not well managed. In most States and Territories there is a lack of government policy and institutional support for the management of private forests and the marketing of wood from private forests is generally poorly coordinated. The potential environmental and economic contribution from private forests is also poorly recognised by landowners and the community, which contributes to the continuing conversion of private forests to other land uses.

Background

Private native forests (including woodlands) are those in freehold ownership and those in public ownership but privately managed through leasehold arrangements. There are approximately 108 million hectares of native forest in Australia held under either freehold (42 million hectares) or leasehold tenure (66 million hectares). They represent 68% of Australia's forests and include the full range of forests and woodland ecosystems.

Private native forests are owned by a large number of landowners, with varying sizes of ownership. They are used for a variety of purposes including sawn timber, veneer, speciality timbers, posts and poles, woodchips, firewood, and provide a range of non-wood values such as apiary, grazing, water production, soil protection, salinity mitigation, landscape, biodiversity conservation and recreation.

Australia's timber industry has a heavy reliance upon private forests especially in Northern NSW, Southeast Queensland and Tasmania, where 45-75% of the total sawlog production is from private forests. Australia's privately owned woodland forests are also important sources of firewood and other forest produce.

Tasmania has comprehensive and effective institutional, regulatory and extension arrangements to support for the long-term sustainable management of private forests. Arrangements in other States and Territories are less comprehensive.

Most privately owned forests have a long history of human intervention, hence undisturbed forest and old growth forest are uncommon on private land. However, private native forests have important conservation significance as many forest and woodland ecosystems are poorly represented on public land. Private forests increasingly are being recognised for their water production, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, salinity mitigation and landscape values (environmental services).

The wide range of conservation and public good benefits from private forests are not well understood by the community and there are limited market mechanisms to allow economic valuation of these environmental services. Consequently, private native forests have been converted to other land uses, including agriculture and urban development. In the absence of incentives or environmental services markets to promote sustainable forest and woodland management there will continue to be strong drivers to clear forests for agriculture.

Key aspects of sustainable forest management of private native forests

Effective policy, legislative and institutional framework to encourage retention and sustainable management, including right to harvest arrangements and Codes of Forest Practices;

Valuation of environmental services or incentives to encourage native forest retention and sustainable management through stewardship arrangements;

Accurate inventories of the extent, distribution, types, uses and values;

Provision of competent forest management extension advisory services and forest management services from qualified professionals to private landholders;

Promotion of markets, access to market information and encouragement of investment infrastructure;

Development of property management plans that incorporate the forested land component and specify requirements for its sustainable management;

Promotion of private native forest management as a sustainable and profitable land management system;

Management and economic measures that protect high conservation value forest;

Policy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia considers that private native forests provide important multiple benefits to the community and that improved institutional support is generally needed to facilitate sustainable management of these forests.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia supports:

- Sustainable management of private native forests to provide renewable timber resources and to maintain environmental and conservation values;
- Development of an appropriate policy, legislative and institutional framework conducive to profitable and sustainable management of private native forests for production, environmental and conservation values;
- Recognition of the important stewardship role of private forest owners and the need for appropriate incentives and environmental service payments to encourage sustainable management of private forests;
- Application of appropriate management plans and Codes of Practices for timber harvesting to protect the many values of private forests;
- Regular inventories of privately managed forests to monitor their composition, extent and condition.

Further Information

National Forest Inventory (1998) Australia's State of the Forest Report 1998. Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.

Parsons, M. (1999). Native Forests on Farms. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Canberra, ACT.

Ryan M.F., Spencer R.D., Keenan R. (2002), Private Native Forests in Australia, What did we learn from the Regional Forest Agreements Program? *Australian Forestry Vol 65 No 2*.

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Plantations in Rural Landscapes

(IFA Forestry Policy Statement No. 2.3)

The issue

The development and expansion of plantations requires that sufficient areas of cleared land are available to be planted. Remnant native vegetation may impact negatively on the establishment, growth and management of plantations. However, clearing of substantially intact areas of native vegetation for plantations can threaten regional conservation objectives.

Background

The National Principles on Forest Practices Related to Wood Production in Plantations, agreed between the Commonwealth and the States, says "Native forests should not be cleared for plantation establishment where this would compromise regional conservation and catchment management objectives."

Large areas of substantially cleared land are required for the expansion of the plantation resource in Australia to meet the goals contained in the policy statement "Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision". In the past, many of Australia's plantations were established by clearing native forest. In recent years, most plantations have been established on marginal agricultural land that has already been cleared of forest.

Most agricultural land suitable for plantation forestry also includes areas of remnant native vegetation, varying in size from single trees to substantial areas. These areas of remnant native vegetation and their impacts must be considered in new plantation developments. Remnant trees may impede plantation establishment and growth, but in some circumstances may have important conservation values, such as nesting sites for birds and mammals. Larger patches of remnant vegetation have greater conservation benefit, and can generally be accommodated in large plantation areas. In some circumstances, the maintenance of native vegetation within plantations can have benefits for stand productivity and the maintenance of key ecosystem processes.

Most States and Territories now have legislation that aims to protect significant native vegetation from clearing. However, this legislation can be complex to implement at the local scale, and may act as an impediment to the development of plantations on agricultural land. The challenge for plantation developers is to achieve the appropriate balance on a landscape scale of native vegetation retention and clearing for plantation establishment.

Policy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the continued development of plantations in rural landscapes to meet the 2020 Vision target provided this development balances environmental, social and economic benefits.

The IFA supports and encourages:

- expansion of plantations on cleared farmland where long-term economic, employment and environmental benefits outweigh the social and environmental impacts.
- application of industry Codes of Practice and Environmental Management Systems in plantation development
- open industry communication leading to increased community understanding of potential impacts and benefits of plantations development.
- ongoing research and development into appropriate species and management practices that will enhance the development of plantations.

The IFA considers that:

- the benefits of plantation development in rural landscapes can be maximised and the impacts minimised by:
 - development of opportunities for downstream processing
 - support by the forest industries of local businesses and communities
 - equitable contribution by the industry to fire prevention and suppression
 - infrastructure planning on a regional rather than industry basis and appropriate
 - plantation industry contribution to road maintenance
 - integration of forestry plantations into farming enterprises where appropriate.

Further Information

Gerrand, A., Keenan, R. J., Kanowski, P. and Stanton, R (2003) Australian forest plantations: an overview of industry, environmental and community issues and benefits.

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Lockie, S. (2003) Conditions for building social capital and community well being through plantation forestry. *Australian Forestry* 66(1) 24-29

Schirmer, J. and Tonts, M. (2003) Plantations and sustainable rural communities. *Australian Forestry* 66(1) 67-74

Tonts, M., Campbell, C. and Black, A. (2001) Socio-economic impacts of farm forestry. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 01/04.

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Forest Regulation and Codes of Practice

(IFA Forest Policy Statement No. 2.8)

Key Statement

Codes of practice provide an effective tool to regulate forest management activities, such as timber harvesting and roading. All significant forest activities should be subject to codes of forest practice, irrespective of land tenure, which are effectively implemented, regularly reviewed and audited with public reporting or audit results.

The Issue

Forest management activities and practices, such as timber harvesting and roading, have the potential to impact adversely on other forest values if not carried out in an appropriate manner. Effective Codes of Forest Practice, are essential to control the standards of on-ground implementation of all significant forest practices. in order to protect forest wood and non-wood values for the community.

Background

Over the last decade initiatives, such as the Regional Forest Agreement process, and other forest conservation and protection measures has substantially reduced the proportion of the forest estate managed for timber production and related activities in public multiple-use forests. In most public native forests, substantial areas are set aside for conservation and the protection of water quality and other forest values.

Forest management planning for multiple-use forests provides a means to meet statutory requirements and provide for the full range of forest values in areas which are available for timber harvesting. Comprehensive forest management plans take account of national, state and local government policies, as well as the requirements of Regional Forest Agreements. In forests and plantations where timber harvesting is permitted, Codes of Forest Practice provide the basis for regulating on ground implementation of timber production and roading.

Most States and Territories have developed Codes of Forest Practice, which apply to public and/or private forests. Some jurisdictions also have significant regulatory controls over forest management activities such as timber harvesting. Codes of Forest Practice provide for the most effective balance between production and conservation and a flexible model to deal with the variability of situations, management intent, area and type of forest and ownership. Such Codes are based on best available science and knowledge and provide a set of guidelines and standards to ensure reasonable protection of the environmental and cultural values of the forest during the implementation of forest practices.

When effectively implemented Codes of Forest Practice can ensure that commercial timber growing and harvesting operations are carried out on both public land and private land in such a way that:

- is compatible with the conservation of the wide range of environmental and social values associated with forests;
- promotes the ecologically sustainable management of native forests proposed for continuous timber production; and
- enhances public confidence in the management of native forests and plantations for timber production.

The major challenges related to Codes of Forest Practice are to:

- ensure effective implementation of existing Codes of Forest Practice across all timber production and roading activities, regardless of land tenure;
- enhance coverage of regulations and codes of practice to deal with other significant forest activities;
- ensure there is regular review, auditing and public reporting of Codes of Forestry Practice;

- promote training and support to all forest managers in developing and implementing codes, particularly in small scale harvesting activities; and
- ensure that codes of practice on private land are developed in a way that is appropriate to the scale, ownership and type of forest and management intent.

Policy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the ongoing development, implementation, auditing and review of Codes of Forest Practice and associated forest regulations, to cover all significant forest management activities, irrespective of land tenure.

The IFA considers that:

- codes of practice provide an effective tool to regulate forest management; and
- appropriate training and support is needed to assist forest managers and those who implement forest activities to meet code of practice requirements.

The IFA supports and encourages Codes of Forest Practice which:

- promote best practice forest management;
- are based on best available science and knowledge;
- set minimum environmental standards;
- are subject to regular public review; and
- are backed by appropriate support, monitoring, compliance, audit, public reporting and where required, enforcement.

Further Information

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Wilkinson, G. R. (1999) Codes of forest practice as regulatory tools for sustainable forest management. In Ellis, R.C. and Smethurst, P.J. (Eds) Practising Forestry Today, Proceedings of the 18th Biennial Conference of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, Hobart, Tasmania, 3-8 October 1999. pp.43-60.

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